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ABSTRACT

In this paper the problems facing the physical education teacher are discussed. Declining enrollment in the public schools, the tendency of school administrations to cut back on physical education programs, and the difficulty of finding jobs are examined. The importance of a new and innovative curriculum in the school of education for the physical education major is emphasized. (JD)

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PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT THE INTERFACE

-Opportunity, Challenge, and Rewards-

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This conference has been both informative and stimulating. And while the program format and topics discussed have left with each of us the feeling that much needs to be done, it is my personal observation that physical education need not apologize for its efforts and contributions in the past, nor be unduly apprehensive about the future. Our strengths lie in the commitment and capabilities of the professionals in the field, such as those of you attending this conference; the potential of our organizational unity via our various state associations, the Midwest AHPER and NASPE; and the need of a technological oriented society for our expertise and knowledge. We have a distinguished past and an extremely bright future. Compared with many other fields in education, we are in an enviable position. My recent professional responsibilities have permitted an in-depth analysis of the nature, scope, direction, and quality of other disciplines, both within and external to teacher education. Further, I have had an opportunity to interact with professionals in other academic fields and know of their concerns about the quality of teaching, research and content strength of their respective areas. Those in teacher education dominated curricula are facing the same problems we face and some have not been nearly as successful in recognizing and meeting those problems, nor will they likely be so in the future.

Teacher education programs in agriculture, for example, have encountered numerous problems. The teacher demand is great in the public school sector,

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but student majors are remaining in agriculture production because of the profit potential inherent in farmland and its products. There is also a great demand for agriculture majors by agri-related businesses and industry and various foreign and domestic governmental agencies. Agriculture education is declining significantly--but not for the same reasons experienced in other fields of education. But for whatever reason, agriculture education is faced with severe problems.

Home Economics is changing, but they too have problems. No longer are they to be viewed in a "cooking and sewing" context. They are into interior design, marketing, dietetics, sex education, nutrition, planned parenthood, consumer services, housing and applied design, and merchandising, clothing and textiles. Industrial education is now industrial technology. Disciplinary efforts and resources are now being devoted to computer graphics, electronics, metals and plastic technology, drafting, and architectural design. The transition from preparing people to teach "Home Ec" and "Shop" to these other areas is certainly not complete however, and definitely not without major concern as to the quality and eventual marketability of their majors. They are confronted with having faculty who are primarily teacher-education oriented rather than discipline based; having faculty whose experience lies in an "educational setting" rather than in a competitive, profit-oriented environment; having curricula directed to future teachers rather than businesses; having limited external resources which are readily available to other professional schools; inadequate knowledge about how to function or operate in the private sector; facing a rapidly changing technology and limited means of remaining contemporary; and almost constant interaction, if not harassment, from other disciplines within the university about their infringement upon educational domains thought

to be "sacred cows." We should not be misled. Make no mistake, operating on the "academic turf" of other disciplines by physical education will be an extremely delicate issue as we seek to expand and broaden our disciplinary base.

We need to have confidence in what we are doing, who we are, and our abilities and capacity to contribute to society. Our discipline and programs are as needed as any others. Our leaders and professionals are as bright, sensitive and intuitive as those in other fields. Our organizations are strong and have great potential for influence and impact. We need to be positive and assertive, and at the same time recognize our problems and formulate plans for their attenuation and eventual demise.

We should not apologize for the quality of our teaching. In many, many schools we are doing an exceptional job, especially in view of the diversity and complexity of the assigned task of teaching skills, conveying knowledge and understanding, instilling attitudes--all of which are complicated by time constraints, large numbers of students and inadequate facilities. Lay people cite a decline in fitness scores as evidence we are not doing a very good job in the public schools. First let me say I disagree with using that variable as a measure of success; but in any event so too are scores declining in math and reading comprehension. People cannot write--literally or figuratively speaking. Math teachers are not doing such a great job; consumer economics classes leave much to be desired; and U. S. government and world history classes are among the worst taught classes in the schools according to a recent survey of secondary school principals.

Physical education must not stand back and be the whipping boy for other disciplines. I hear comments that we need to get back to the basics,

well--what is more basic than physical education? I hear requests for eliminating required physical education in the public schools. Be cautious. What will they put in its place,--more math or more reading? While more of time and teachers in certain areas may be beneficial, let us not acquiesce without reason to societal pleas for more basic education. Some administrators want to eliminate certain mandated programs so they can substitute a pet elective or extend the time for another mandated program which heretofore has failed to meet minimal requirements for success.

> . . . Each of us must press for what some might term "unfair treatment" in resource allocations over the next several years, i.e., budgets geared to the maintenance of overall program quality rather than sensitive only to fluctuations in instructional head count. Local fiscal support for training in the education profession has been and is disgraceful in most colleges and universities. This problem should be brought out of the closet. For ourselves, conservatism and reactivity will be self-defeating; venturing on the basis of wishful thinking will result in shortfalls and failure. We must avoid accruing the "margin of mediocrity" . . . . We must avoid inappropriate panic responses that ignore our contextual strengths. We must avoid isolationism and problem avoidance. We must, in effect, avoid the most natural organizational responses. This must be a period in which quality and excellence of teacher education performance are emphasized more strongly than ever before. Our ability to influence national-level planners and higher education administrators and to take advantage of opportunities that will arise in the near future depends on it.[1]

We must not internalize our thinking and efforts. We must not operationalize an isolationist philosophy, thinking that institutional commitment is all that counts.

In our planning we cannot have the present be our plan for the future. Faculty will have to become more diversified; the valuable and needed teacher may be the more liberally educated in one's discipline. Perspectives of individual faculty autonomy may have to be altered. Workloads and professional responsibilities will have to reflect what is compatible with student and school needs, not just self-fulfilling endeavors of the faculty. We can no longer

afford to indiscriminately employ new faculty to implement new programs. But neither can we afford not to institute innovative programs. Cooperation and a true sense of mission and commitment will be the traits that distinguish between viable, productive professionals and those not so described. David L. Clark at the recent American Association of Colleges annual meeting warned:

> . . . Innovative programs of teacher preparation may no longer be deemed financially feasible, and doctoral programs will be hard pressed for adequate funding. Institutions may fall to a new "margin of mediocrity"; conservatism and defensiveness may be the order of the day.[2]

We must, however, face some current problems which are a result of previous maljudgments and continued programmatic thrusts. The manpower situation in physical education is one example. The Physical Education teacher surplus which exists in most parts of the United States today is an outgrowth of a multiplicity of variables, the interaction of which has culminated in a situation never before experienced in physical education. Literally hundreds of physical education teachers are actively seeking teaching positions with no viable prospects on the horizon. The teacher surplus is a pervasive phenomenon which has been predictive in nature, the subject of limited discussion and, until recently, the focus of little or no positive action.[3]

Basically, no one factor may be cited as a direct cause of this surplus, but rather a variety of factors emanating from educational, legal, sociological and economic considerations. Though pervasive, the causes of the teacher surplus include: 1) people are pursuing teaching in physical education as a career because of their interest in physical activity and as a result of this participation, a desire to coach; 2) the postwar baby boom is now being reflected in the job market at a time when enrollment figures in the public schools are leveling off substantially; 3) the financial condition of

school districts across the country is unsound resulting in fewer teaching positions;[4] 4) in some states there has been an elimination of mandated physical education programs and in other states a reduction in funding for mandated programs; and 5) simply more people are going to college than ever before and schools of education, and particularly departments of physical education, have had a "reputation" for permissive screening and retention policies. Modifying the situation may be difficult in view of physical education's previous successes in implementing change. Where change has been in evidence, the focus in physical education has been on procedure rather than content.

In any event, there tends to be acquiescence as to the status of the surplus, the reasons for its existence and to some extent, the provisions needed to attenuate its impact. If school boards, practicing educational administrators, teacher union leaders, and departments of physical education in higher education are to generate a positive influence on the physical education teacher surplus, there will be a decided change in present emphasis and a concerted effort of cooperation. Too frequently, the various segments of our profession capable of initiating change function not from a professional referent but rather from an individual or institutional and department referent. Operationally this position limits choices, impedes progress, and tends to be provincial and self-serving. The challenge lies not in recognizing the problem but rather in implementing positive procedures for reducing the surplus by taking advantage of the oversupply and adopting guidelines so as not to replicate the situation in the future.[5]

And what of the future of physical education? What will the future hold for professionals, and "would be" professionals, as well as society, in physical education? Some say the future can be predicted and my review

of the literature revealed a surprising number of studies dealing with the concept of prediction and prognosis. Future studies have evolved from groups and projects such as the Commission on the Year 2000, the Futuribles project, and the "Committee on the Next Thirty Years."

I know that traditionally academic change in physical education is slow and cumbersome. Curriculum revisions require months, sometimes years, to plan, enact, and implement. Thus, the present curriculum is always appropriate for the past, and hopefully the present and future. I believe that physical education, movement, health, and leisure will be a big business in the next few decades. I believe those of us in education have the capacity for exerting a significant impact upon the future. I see the need to explore new avenues for application of our knowledge. We must proceed cautiously, however, before we expend precious resources for personnel and technology and profess payoffs which we can't produce. In addition to the schools and "profit making" enterprises, physical education should be aware of the opportunities to participate at the governmental level, for example, with the Administration of Aging and the National Association of Human Development. Employment opportunities also exist with the Peace Corps and government military installation overseas. Foreign countries are also seeking teachers.

May I also take note of the fact that we still have a daily requirement in many states. If that requirement remains there will still be a need to have strong, productive professional preparation programs in physical education. It is interesting to note what is happening in other countries in this regard; and this comment relates specifically to a recommendation noted in Monday's discussion. France has adopted a tough new law making physical education mandatory for all of the country's 9.5 million elementary and secondary

school students. Pierre Mazeaud, Minister for Youth and Sports, said the schools will be required to provide five hours of instruction and activity per week for each pupil. The new law also "encourages" employers and institutions of higher education to allow regular time out for exercising.

"From now on," Mazeaud comments, "the promotion of sports constitutes for everyone, public persons and private, a national obligation."

Mazeaud announced an immediate speedup in the recruitment and training of physical education teachers, and in the acquisition and development of equipment and facilities.

French concern about physical education grew out of studies showing that three-fourths of the country's 53 million citizens do not engage in sport, and that 15 million of them have never tried any sport at all.

We are not without challenge at either the institutional and personal level;

> . . . Many successful teachers have never forgotten their sufferance of the much-maligned "methods" courses, their sense of abandonment by the college faculty during practice teaching, and their heightened anxiety during that first year of survival. They have been required to take additional graduate work from theory-filled professors who, in their view, do not know as much about the real world and do not work as hard as they do. To twist Veblen's phrase, they see themselves forced to support the leisure of the theory class. As much as anyone else, they understand the need to bridge the gap between theory and practice. From firsthand experience they know that the gap will not be bridged merely by campus lectures. But due consideration must also be given to the hard-pressed professors who must confront the nagging problem of their own survival within the context of declining enrollments, nonexistent jobs for most of their graduates, and criticisms from one side that their instruction lacks intellectual and theoretical substance and is too vocationally oriented, and from the other that it is too theoretical and has little professional relevance.[6]

In summary, we have heard addresses; watched demonstrations; interacted in small groups; listened to panels of experts on alternative careers, staff development and certification; discussed field and clinical experiences; talked

of teachers, students and administrators; heard of the expectations of new teachers, and plans for implementing professional preparation conferences in each of our various states. It has been extremely exciting and stimulating.

In closing, and by way of challenge, we simply cannot afford to carry on business as usual. We have responsibility for becoming professionally involved in initiating and implementing change. We cannot be maintenance engineers and satisfied with merely managing the routine. Autonomy and productive independence as a professional necessitate a commitment to our students, institutions and professional organizations. Education then, must be viewed as a process rather than a product. I feel that physical education as a profession is in a period of transition; our academic discipline is growing and changing, in ways unique in some areas and as anticipated in others. In these times of economic constraints, competition for the minds and energies of students, and attention to the humanistic and technological needs of society, static programs and their faculty will reach a quick and just end. Those in the profession who are cognizant of professional directions, new programs being implemented, and new developments in curricula and teaching methodologies, will be those who survive and make the significant and lasting contributions to their institutions and the profession. Operating on the periphery, anticipating beneficial spin-offs will not be productive. Involvement, participation, and commitment, are what is needed.

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